Emotional impacts of psoriatic disease

Day-to-day life with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can be challenging. You may have times when you are feeling healthy, strong and resilient, but you may also have times when you experience feelings like loneliness, embarrassment, anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, anger or fear.

Working with your health care provider to find a treatment plan that helps to effectively manage your psoriatic disease can lessen your daily discomfort and create a sense of hope for the future. It is equally important to acknowledge how psoriatic disease impacts your life, ask for help from those around you, and create healthy habits to manage the challenges of living with a chronic disease.

**Emotional health and psoriatic disease**

While not everyone with psoriatic disease is emotionally impacted, there are several ways that it can affect the body and brain. Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are lifelong diseases of the immune system that result in systemic inflammation. We typically think of this inflammation showing up on the skin with psoriasis or in the joints with psoriatic arthritis, but this inflammation can also impact other parts of the body, including our brain’s chemistry.

This systemic inflammation means that people with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis are at a higher risk for developing other conditions (comorbidities). Among people with psoriasis, about 24 percent have anxiety and about 10 percent have clinical depression. Studies show that people with psoriatic arthritis have an even higher risk, as about 33 percent have anxiety and about 22 percent have depression.

**Tips for coping**

- **Celebrate the wins** – Our brains tend to focus on the negative, so take time to be thankful for things that are going well. While it’s normal to have worries, try to balance these thoughts with something you’re grateful for or feel hopeful about.

- **Educate yourself and others** – The more you understand your disease, treatments and triggers, the better equipped you are to handle the ups and downs. Encourage those around you to educate themselves as well.

- **Reach out** – Call in your support system to help you through the tough days. Text a friend, call a family member or email us here at NPF to get connected with someone else living with psoriatic disease. You are not in this alone!

- **Engage in your own success** – You can’t control that you have psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis, but you can control how you live with it. It’s easier to feel hopeful for the future when you’re connected with others and active in your treatment plan. Work with your community and your health care providers to build plans for success.
Social stigma

When psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are not well understood, people may fill in their lack of understanding with negative assumptions. They might assume that your skin condition is contagious or that you’re exaggerating your pain level. The key to dispelling these myths is to replace them with accurate information.

Educate yourself about your disease and then use that knowledge to educate others. In brief encounters in public this might be as simple as, “I have psoriasis. It’s a disease that makes my skin grow faster than yours. It’s not contagious.” It can help to pause, think and respond with knowledge.

Relationships

Within relationships, you might choose to have a longer conversation about how psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis impacts your body, how it makes you feel and how others can best support you. It’s up to you how much you want to share with others. Most people will eagerly follow your lead on how to talk about your disease. If you display confidence and comfort in discussing it, others will likely follow.

People often think they have to push their feelings down and “just deal with it.” While it can be challenging to open up about struggles, bringing them out into the light lets you and your support system get a good picture of what’s really going on for you. We often think that asking for help makes us a burden, when most of the time those who care about us just need a little direction on how they can be supportive.

Who you can talk to

It’s important to talk about how having a chronic disease impacts your daily life as well as your overall outlook and mental health. There are many places to go for support:

- A friend or family member
- Someone else living with psoriatic disease
- A mental health professional who specializes in working with people living with chronic illness
- Your disease specialist or primary care doctor

We’re here to help! We can answer questions you may have, offer resources on how to start difficult conversations, and connect you with a peer supporter through our One to One program to talk (via phone or email) with someone else who knows what you’re going through.

What should I do next?

Contact our Patient Navigation Center for assistance finding a mental health professional or specialist, to sign up for the One to One program, or just to talk about what you’re going through [contact information below].